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HIGH COMMISSIONER'S PROGRAMME

Forty-seventh session

REPORT OF THE THIRD MEETING OF THE STANDING COMMITTEE (25-27 June 1996)

I. INTRODUCTION

1. The third meeting of the Executive Committee's Standing Committee was opened by His Excellency Ambassador Jakob Esper Larsen (Denmark), Chairman of the Executive Committee.

II. ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA AND OF THE REPORT OF THE SECOND MEETING

2. The Provisional Annotated Agenda (EC/46/SC/CRP.26/Rev.2) and the Draft Report of the 10-11 April Meeting of the Standing Committee (EC/46/SC/CRP.27) were both adopted without revision.

3. The Deputy High Commissioner then delivered an opening statement in which he stressed the urgent need for funding of humanitarian assistance programmes in the Great Lakes region, where the basic levels of protection and assistance sustaining 1.8 million people were now severely compromised. He expressed concern for the deteriorating situation in Burundi and also noted the Office's preoccupation with the escalation of violence in Liberia. In regard to the Balkans, UNHCR remained convinced that more could be done to improve the material conditions conducive to return. Eighteen priority areas in Bosnia and Herzegovina had been targeted for immediate assistance in rebuilding basic community infrastructures. He further noted the formal closure of the Comprehensive Plan of Action for Indo-Chinese refugees on 30 June and reviewed evolving situations elsewhere in the world.

III. INTERNATIONAL PROTECTION

4. Under this item, the Standing Committee had before it five documents for discussion: Note on International Protection (EC/46/SC/CRP.37 and Corr.1); Progress Report on Informal Consultations on the Provision of International Protection to all who need it (EC/46/SC/CRP.34); UNHCR's role in National Legal and Judicial Capacity-Building (EC/46/SC/CRP.31); Resettlement: an Instrument of Protection and a Durable Solution (EC/46/SC/CRP.32); and The Return of Persons not in need of International Protection (EC/46/SC/CRP.36 and Corr.1). An information note on documentation recently issued by the Division of International Protection (EC/46/SC/CRP.39) was also available.

A. Note on International Protection

5. Introducing the Note on International Protection (EC/46/SC/CRP.37), the Director of the Division of International Protection reminded delegations that this year's Note attempted to analyse the positive and enabling role that a consistent and widely accepted protection framework can contribute to comprehensive responses to refugee situations. He stressed the need to move away from the compartmentalization of issues which cause population displacement and which are relevant to resolving refugee problems. In particular, the various and complex dimensions of current and likely future refugee problems demanded the promotion of collective responses in order effectively to address their political, economic and social aspects

6. In the ensuing debate, there was widespread recognition of the need for comprehensive regional or sub-regional approaches to refugee situations, guided by the need for protection and solutions. The basic thrust of the Note was generally accepted; certain aspects nonetheless were queried. Several delegations cited the recently concluded CIS Conference as a model of a comprehensive regional approach, particularly in the context of prevention. Most delegations recognized the crucial link between human rights violations and refugee flows or involuntary displacement, and agreed that a commitment to protection principles, and to universal standards, should constitute the basis for such comprehensive approaches. The need for international solidarity was also highlighted by some delegations in this context.

7. Acknowledging the value of collective responses, it was nonetheless pointed out that there could be no single blueprint: flexibility would be required to accommodate differences in conflicts and regions. A few delegations noted that UNHCR did not spell out a precise role for itself in comprehensive approaches. As the Note itself suggested, UNHCR's perspective may assist in the identification of protection-based comprehensive approaches.

8. Responding to the debate, the Director thanked delegations for their constructive comments and concluded that UNHCR welcomed further discussion with the Executive Committee on the role that it might envision for UNHCR in this area generally, as well as in specific refugee situations.

B. Progress report on informal consultations on the provision of international protection to all who need it

9. The Chief of General Legal Advice introduced EC/46/SC/CRP.34. Most delegations expressed support for UNHCR's initiative in this area, and encouraged the Office to continue the process, keeping the Executive Committee informed. Several delegations also expressed interest in participating in the consultations; yet others proposed the involvement in this process of regional expertise as well as international NGOs.

10. One delegation suggested that the first aim of the consultations should be to find ways to enhance the implementation of existing instruments, most notably the 1951 Convention, rather than developing new instruments. The desirability of drawing on good examples and lessons learnt was also mentioned, as was the importance of consistency and certainty in the protection provided. A number of delegations referred to temporary protection, including related issues regarding return, and state responsibility.

C. UNHCR's role in national legal and judicial capacity-building

11. Conference Room Paper EC/46/SC/CRP.31 was introduced by the Chief of UNHCR's Promotion of Refugee Law Section. In the ensuing debate, most delegations generally welcomed efforts being undertaken by UNHCR to assist Governments in strengthening national legal and judicial capacity. Several delegations recognized the importance of such activities in enabling Governments better to carry out their international obligations, particularly as a factor in sustainable reintegration of returning refugees.

12. While welcoming such activities, several delegations also cited the need for UNHCR to bear in mind its specific mandate and resource considerations. They emphasized the importance of associating other actors, notably the High Commissioner for Human Rights, UNDP and regional bodies, to ensure that initiatives undertaken by UNHCR form part of a broader framework and avoid duplication. A few delegations also emphasized that UNHCR should undertake such activities at the request of, and in cooperation with, the Government concerned. The CIS Programme of Action was cited as a positive example. Some delegations suggested that it may be useful to broaden the Inter-Agency Standing Committee, in particular its Sub-Committee on Internally Displaced Persons, to include other agencies that could play a useful role.

D. Resettlement: an instrument of protection and a durable solution

13. The Chief of the Resettlement Section introduced EC/46/SC/CRP.32 and informed the Standing Committee of efforts being made to take full advantage of existing resettlement opportunities, reinforce management and assess resettlement needs in the broader context of solutions. An overview was provided on the conclusions of the first formal consultation on resettlement involving Governments and NGOs (Geneva, 24 June 1996).

14. Several delegations commended the Conference Room Paper and reaffirmed their continuing commitment to resettlement as an instrument of protection and as a durable solution. Many delegations welcomed the issuance of the Resettlement Handbook and the increased attention being accorded to

resettlement issues. A number of delegations stressed the usefulness of the Working Group on Resettlement as a forum for discussing criteria and regional approaches, and called on more States to resettle refugees.

E. The return of persons not in need of international protection

15. Conference Room Paper EC/46/SC/CRP.36 was introduced by the Chief of General Legal Advice. Some delegations emphasized the difficulties their countries face in returning persons not in need of international protection and referred particularly to the problems of illegal migration and undocumented rejected asylum-seekers, as well as the negative impact that these problems could have for other asylum-seekers.

16. There was concurrence with UNHCR's emphasis on satisfactory refugee status determination procedures and criteria and other protection mechanisms to ensure that persons in need of international protection are not affected. A number of delegations stressed the obligation of countries of origin to readmit their own nationals, while others urged the need to view the issue in a broader context, in particular, to link it to comprehensive approaches. Some delegations also suggested that a more systematic assessment by States of the problems associated with particular rejected caseloads would be a useful step in this process.

17. Summing up, the Chairman reiterated the overwhelming acceptance of comprehensive approaches, as detailed in the Note, and recalled that all the Conference Room Papers had generally been welcomed and endorsed by the Standing Committee. The Chairman informed delegations that the draft Conclusions on International Protection would be circulated in the summer, for discussion at the September meeting of the Standing Committee.

IV. ANNUAL THEME

18. The Secretary introduced this item, proposing that the pursuit and implementation of durable solutions be used as the annual theme to be debated at the forty-seventh meeting of the Executive Committee.

19. One delegation asked what role the annual theme was to play; what tangible results were envisaged from it; and what the process was for selecting the theme. The same delegation suggested that, in future, annual theme proposals should be discussed at the April Standing Committee. Other delegations suggested amendments to the draft decision, which were included in the adopted decision (annexed).

20. Responding, the Secretary recalled that an important element of the recent reform of Executive Committee working methods was to link the work of the Standing Committee with that of the plenary items thus ensuring that the entire agenda of Executive Committee meetings formed a coherent whole. The debate on the annual theme served on the one hand to consolidate discussions in previous international meetings and to identify areas for further study in the Standing Committee's Programme of work. He welcomed the suggestion that the proposal for the annual theme should henceforth be discussed at the April meeting of the Standing Committee.

V. PROGRAMME AND FUNDING ISSUES

21. The Standing Committee had before it a document entitled, Update on Programme and Funding Projections for 1996 and Tentative Estimates for the 1997 General Programmes Target (EC/46/SC/CRP.30) and an amended draft decision.

22. In the review of 1996 programmes, it was pointed out that General Programmes remained at the approved level of $ 445.3 million; programme needs under Special Programmes were now projected at $ 949.6 million. The uses made of, and reimbursements to, the Emergency Fund and the Voluntary Repatriation Fund were also reviewed. Drawings on the Programme Reserve were also considered. The current funding situation was also presented; this was comparable to the level of contributions at the same time in 1995. With overall 1996 needs projected at some $ 1.4 billion, donors were asked to be generous. The Standing Committee was reminded of the funding priority which the Office attached to General Programmes; the trend of increased contributions over the last two years to these programmes was welcomed. Funds to support operations related to solutions (e.g. Horn of Africa, West Africa, Angola, Guatemala, Afghanistan, Myanmar, South-East Asia and former Yugoslavia) and for the Caucasus were needed urgently, as were funds for operations in the Great Lakes region of Central Africa.

23. The tentative 1997 budget estimate of $ 452.6 million was presented and explained. It included a Programme Reserve set at 10 per cent of programmed activities. The level of the 1996 General Programmes showed an increase of 1.6 per cent over the approved 1995 level.

24. Delegations made statements or posed questions on a number of particular operations (Horn of Africa, former Yugoslavia, Cyprus, West Africa) and other items (the impact of United Nations Regular Budget cuts; the fundability of the General Programme increase; the strategy for the termination of individual General Programmes; criteria for allocations under the funds/reserve). The need to broaden UNHCR's donor base was underlined by several delegations. The trend of increased contributions to General Programmes was also welcomed.

25. Responding, the Secretariat expressed the opinion that the new proposed General Programmes target was fundable; recent trends in contributions to General Programmes were positive; and that the full funding of General Programmes was a UNHCR priority.

26. The Standing Committee adopted the related revised Decision on Programme and Funding (annexed).

VI. REGIONAL REVIEW

A. Overview of regional developments in Africa

27. The Standing Committee had before it an Update on Regional Developments in Africa (EC/46/SC/CRP.35, and Corr.1). Opening the item, the Director of the Regional Bureau for Africa briefed delegations on the latest developments in the region. Regarding the Great Lakes, he depicted a currently bleak scenario, and delineated the six points of a proposed Plan of Action for resolving the Rwanda/Burundi refugee situation. The points included plans to separate military from civilian elements in the camps; the transfer of some camps away from border regions; the elimination of a prevailing sense of impunity and encouraging the Rwandan Government's efforts to establish structures to begin genocide-related trials; the provision of more assistance to host countries, thereby safeguarding asylum; the confirmation of pledges made during the Round Table conference on Rwanda; and the encouragement of a dialogue between the Rwandan Government and refugee communities. The Director also spoke of the chaotic situation in Liberia, and urged neighbouring countries to continue to accept refugees from that conflict. He noted the work that remained to be done in East Africa and the Horn of Africa, and drew some hope from the changed circumstances in Angola, Mali, Senegal, Sierra Leone and Togo.

28. Taking the floor on this item, one delegation suggested that the push/pull strategy proposed during the Rwanda Round Table be incorporated into the proposed Plan of Action. Another delegation supported the deployment of international military observers in the airports of eastern Zaire to monitor arms trafficking. Yet another expressed support for President Nyerere's initiatives to resolve the Great Lakes crisis. The proposed plan of action was generally welcomed.

29. Several delegations cited a close link between safeguarding the institution of asylum and rehabilitation/economic development, with a number of them insisting that the international community had to provide more support to poorer host countries caring for large refugee populations. The deleterious consequences of resource shortages - including environmental degradation, armed robbery and poaching - were detailed by one delegation. Resettlement or the creation of safe zones within countries of origin were suggested as two means of easing asylum countries' burdens. One delegation announced that its Government was disbursing aid in such a way as to encourage a culture of peace. Another delegation announced that its Government was co-sponsoring a conference on development for Western and Central Africa with the Ivorian Government which would take place in Abidjan in August.

30. Regarding West Africa, one delegation was of the opinion that repatriation to Liberia could not take place before the deployment of peace-keeping forces throughout the country and the disarmament of factions. In this regard, the Director of the Regional Bureau for Africa supported one delegation's call for more support to be provided to the West African peace-keeping force (ECOMOG). Citing a reference in the Update, one delegation denied that there could be genuine Ogoni refugees in Benin.

31. Speaking on East Africa and the Horn of Africa, one delegation noted with satisfaction the expected repatriation of 50,000 Ethiopian refugees from the Sudan by the end of 1996, but mentioned that more efforts should be made to assist their reintegration. Another expressed concern at certain violent acts to which Sudanese refugees in Kakuma camp, Kenya, have been exposed.

B. Report of the Chairman on his mission to India, Bhutan and Nepal

32. The Chairman then delivered an oral report on his 6-27 January mission to India, Bhutan and Nepal. He detailed his discussions with the Governments of Bhutan and Nepal, during which he endeavoured to facilitate a solution to problems caused by refugees and other persons who have come to Nepal from Bhutan. The Chairman also described his talks with Indian government officials, and United Nations and NGO representatives concerning UNHCR's presence and activities in India.

C. Conclusion of the Comprehensive Plan of Action (CPA)

33. Three delegations took the floor to mark the formal conclusion of the CPA. They observed that while repatriation patterns shifted, the cooperation of the Governments of the host countries and the countries of origin remained constant. Some delegations noted the need for UNHCR and the international community to continue to search for solutions for the remaining refugees among the caseload, and said that emphasis should continue to be placed on the reintegration needs of the returnees in countries of origin. The Director of the Regional Bureau for Asia and Oceania stated that UNHCR would continue, in a good offices capacity, to support repatriation and care and maintenance costs for non-refugees until end-September 1996. He also acknowledged the complexity of the Hong Kong situation.

VII. REPORTS RELATING TO OVERSIGHT

A. Lessons learnt from the Rwanda Emergency

34. The Standing Committee had before it a document entitled Lessons Learnt from the Rwanda Emergency: Further Reflections (EC/46/SC/CRP.28). The Head of the DANIDA Evaluation Unit and Chairman of the Steering Committee of the OECD/DAC Joint Evaluation Committee summarized the Report's main findings and recommendations. The Director of the Inspection and Evaluation Service (IES) then formally introduced the paper to the Committee.

35. Several delegations expressed their interest in guidelines on contingency planning but were concerned about the implied funding requirements if the planning were to be country-specific. Two delegations stressed the importance of refugee registration, with one enquiring as to the prospects for another census following that of February 1995.

36. Lack of coordination at field level, the problem of overlapping mandates and rivalries of agencies involved, and the problem of the management of emergencies at Headquarters were raised by a number of delegations as issues which required serious attention. One delegation asked for an explanation on the division of responsibility between DHA and UNHCR on service packages; another wondered if UNHCR had tried to find countries willing to contribute to them. Other issues raised were those of the availability of an internal

study on Rwanda, and of implementing partners' accountability and their compliance with UNHCR's procedures.

37. In reply, the Head of the DANIDA Evaluation Unit said coordination was, and remained, a problem. The Head of IES said that a broader UNHCR internal study would address the problems of coordination and communication, and that the main conclusions from that study would be made available in the report of IES to the Executive Committee. He confirmed that security in camps was on the work programme for his Service for this year, and reassured delegates that a UNHCR control of NGO standards and accountability was part of the ongoing Delphi Project. Adding to the responses, the Director of the Division of Programmes and Operational Support said that a summary of guidelines on contingency planning would be made available, and that the importance of registration was well understood. He said that coordination of development of service packages lay now with DHA (MCDU), and went on to say that Governments had indicated that decisions as to the availability of service packages could only be made at the time of request.

38. The annexed draft decision was adopted with no amendments.

B. Internal oversight mechanism

39. The draft report of the Secretary-General on enhancing internal oversight mechanisms (EC/46/SC/CRP.29) was reviewed by the Standing Committee. A summary of discussions follows:

40. The Director of the Inspection and Evaluation Service introduced the Secretary-General's draft report, adding that UNHCR agreed with its recommendations and hoped that the Standing Committee would concur and approve the draft decision attached.

41. Questions were raised by two delegations as how the monitoring of implementation of recommendations was carried out at present, whether current mechanisms were sufficient in UNHCR, and if not, what measures were being taken.

42. Regarding the report's observation that there were higher budgets for audit than for evaluations in relief operations, several delegations urged an increase in evaluations, commenting that evaluations could be carried out either in-house or otherwise. If the need for audits in humanitarian programmes was apparent, as cited in paragraph 16 of the report, the necessity for evaluations in UNHCR's programmes was no less apparent, one delegation felt.

43. Several delegations wanted to know UNHCR's views on the question of an investigation unit and stated that UNHCR's existing capacity for investigation (see Recommendation 3 (para. 40)) should be reflected in the conclusions.

44. A question was raised by some delegations on the organization of cooperation between the organization's oversight functions. It was considered generally that monthly oversight meetings would be too frequent. An additional query was made concerning the working of UNHCR's Audit Committee.

45. More information was sought about reporting procedures, and the report's suggestion that periodic comprehensive and ad hoc reports be submitted to the governing body. One delegation asked UNHCR to inform the Standing Committee members what measures had been taken in this regard.

46. Information was again requested on the proposal, in Recommendation 7, to complement the reporting line of OIOS to the General Assembly with summary records of UNHCR's internal oversight issues. On this latter issue, one delegation said that more dialogue was needed. Another delegation, however, welcomed the idea, noting that this would strengthen transparency, allowing the General Assembly to monitor oversight activities within each organization, thus revealing overall achievements and areas of concern.

47. One delegation said it expected UNHCR to make use of OIOS and, reciprocally, that OIOS would have access to UNHCR. While strongly supporting OIOS, the delegation assured UNHCR that this did not constitute a lack of confidence in the organization.

48. Other points raised by delegations included the actual siting of the evaluation function -preferred, by one delegation, to be merged with inspection - and wish to receive more reports on oversight from the Inspector and the Controller.

49. Replying to the interventions, the Director said a working group on oversight had been established within the Delphi Project and its report, just submitted, was being discussed. It covered some of the issues raised by the delegations such as investigation, cooperation between oversight units and reporting procedures. They were at present under review by Senior Management. Once agreed upon, they would be part of the overall plan of action for implementation of the changes within the organization.

50. The Director agreed that the monitoring of the implementation of recommendations was of vital importance and constituted a measure of success. The Inspection and Evaluation Service had set up a database which registered all recommendations, as well as a system for follow-up three months after the issuance of each report. OIOS did have access, he said, to UNHCR's documentation.

51. For his part, UNHCR's Controller pointed out the distinction between external and internal audit, and confirmed that monitoring of internal audit recommendations was systematically carried out. UNHCR monitored the implementation of each individual recommendation, he said. Reporting to OIOS was on a quarterly basis on the level of implementation and he stressed that OIOS had full access to UNHCR accounts and operations through AMCD.

52. Amendments proposed to the draft decision led to discussion as to how the Standing Committee's comments on the draft report were to be conveyed to the Secretary-General. The Secretariat said a résumé of the discussions

would be circulated to delegations for their comments and then relayed to the Secretary-General by the High Commissioner. The annexed amended draft decision was approved.

VIII. ECOSOC RESOLUTION 1995/56

53. The Director of the Geneva office of the Department of Humanitarian Affairs opened this item by providing a general briefing on the DHA-established inter-agency task force and progress made in considering the ECOSOC resolution in the governing bodies of other agencies. The Director of UNHCR's Division of External Relations then presented the document entitled Follow-up to ECOSOC Resolution 1995/56: UNHCR Activities in Relation to Prevention (EC/46/SC/CRP.33).

54. A number of delegations took the floor on this item, focusing their remarks around questions of UNHCR's mandate for prevention, complementarity with other humanitarian actors, costs and early warning. Speaking on the first of these points, one delegation made it clear that it regarded UNHCR's prevention activities as an unwelcome extension of its original mandate; another also expressed its reservations, upholding the need for state consent before undertaking such activities. Other delegations, however, voiced their support for preventive activities, particularly those that reinforced national capacity. Several delegations underlined the importance of avoiding overlap in implementing preventive activities, and invoked the logic of either DHA or lead-agency coordination. Some delegations cited the cost-effectiveness of prevention, noting the big savings to be reaped from small investments in prevention. Another cautioned against a large UNHCR role in countries of origin, saying that the Office might thereby be overextending its resources. Two delegations noted with concern the apparent funding of emergency response operations at the cost of development activities. Some delegations asked the DHA representative about early warning systems.

55. In his response, the DHA representative noted that while there was no single model for coordination, DHA was attempting to ensure predictable complementarity - institutionalizing who does what, and when. Regarding the lead agency concept, he acknowledged its usefulness, but observed that it was not an impartial mechanism, and should not be applied automatically. On the question of early warning systems, the representative cited three elements that DHA considered essential: Humanitarian Early Warning System; ReliefWeb, or internet accessible information; and weekly meetings with the United Nations' Departments of Political Affairs and of Peace-Keeping Operations. UNHCR's Director of the Division of External Relations, in his response, cited relief-to-development collaboration with, inter alia, the World Bank and UNDP. He also noted that the Office was working on memoranda of understanding with other agencies. He ended by reminding delegations that a synthesis of the Standing Committee discussions on ECOSOC resolution 1995/56 would be presented to the September Standing Committee in the form of a draft conclusion for eventual adoption by the forty-seventh session of the Executive Committee.

IX. MANAGEMENT AND ADMINISTRATIVE MATTERS

56. The Deputy High Commissioner introduced a progress report on Project Delphi (EC/46/SC/CRP.38), noting that the process has been an almost entirely in-house exercise focused on three broad areas of UNHCR's management processes-operations, people and money. Staff participation, key to the change management process, was reinforced with an extensive staff survey in March, which identified several key areas perceived as needing improvement. Consolidating output from the survey, the focus groups and more than 100 Delphi cells world-wide, the Change Management Group Report, submitted to the High Commissioner in May, presented a broad conceptual framework of the changes needed. Project Delphi then entered Phase Two, the aim of which is to transform the conceptual framework into a Plan of Action by the end of August. The High Commissioner had agreed to the creation of a Change Management Support and Coordination Unit to implement the Plan of Action. Existing posts in the Organization and Methods Section will be redeployed to staff this unit. The Plan of Action, once endorsed by the High Commissioner, would be forwarded to the Standing Committee for consideration at its September meeting.

X. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

A. Rental costs

57. The Controller introduced Montbrillant Building: Rental Costs (EC/46/SC/CRP.40) to the Standing Committee by pointing out that, when the issue of the rental agreement for the Montbrillant building had been discussed by the Sub-Committee on Administrative and Financial Matters in previous years, the proposed rent had been based on an interest rate of 3 per cent and a repayment over 99 years of the loan contracted by FIPOI to construct the building. In response to a letter from the High Commissioner on 2 January 1996 to the Head of the Permanent Mission of Switzerland to the United Nations in Geneva, the Swiss authorities had made a new offer, subject to parliamentary approval, of a rent package based on 0 per cent interest and repayment of the loan over 50 years. This offer would result in a reduction of the rent by some SwF 1.3 million. It was as a result of this new offer that UNHCR was presenting a brief paper on the subject to the Standing Committee to ask for their endorsement in formalizing the new arrangements.

58. The Swiss delegation pointed out that the offer presented to UNHCR was in line with that offered to all other international organizations in Geneva, and that in recognition of UNHCR's humanitarian mandate, they were willing to make an additional annual contribution to the Office of SwF 2 million. The Swiss delegation also indicated that they would appreciate a decision at the current Standing Committee so that the rental agreement could be finalized with UNHCR and the authorities could begin discussions on some required alterations to the building.

59. Other delegations felt that more time and information on which to base a decision should have been available. Delegations asked specifically for comparative rental costs for other such premises in Geneva, as well as a comparison with the rental arrangements offered to other international organizations in the city. Questions were raised about the percentage, if

any, of management charges that were included in the rental amount, and whether the ACABQ had made any recommendations on the subject.

60. In his response, the Controller pointed out that the Montbrillant rent was significantly cheaper than other rents paid by UNHCR as well as average commercial rents in Geneva. He nonetheless acknowledged the need expressed by delegations to have more time and information before a decision could be taken. It was decided that the issue would be placed on the agenda of the next Standing Committee meeting, and that UNHCR would provide a more comprehensive paper on the subject at that time.

B. Support costs of international NGO partners

61. The Standing Committee, in accord with its decision taken at its second session on the Support Costs of International NGO Partners (EC/46/CRP.27, Annex, II, para. (f)), addressed the question of the initial standard percentage for such support. The background to the issue was set out by the Rapporteur. A draft decision which was the result of informal consultations and which set the initial standard percentage at 5 per cent (with provision for transitional arrangements) was adopted without discussion (annexed).

62. There being no further business, the Chairman adjourned the meeting.

DECISIONS ADOPTED BY THE THIRD STANDING COMMITTEE

I. DECISION ON THE ANNUAL THEME

The Standing Committee,

Recalling the decision taken at the forty-sixth session of the Executive Committee that the General Debate will be discontinued and be replaced by a debate on a focused annual theme to be selected in consultation with the High Commissioner and the Standing Committee at a meeting held at least three months before the annual plenary session (A/AC.96/860, para. 32(h)),

(a) Decides that the annual theme to be discussed at the forty-seventh session of the Executive Committee will be the pursuit and implementation of durable solutions;

(b) Considers that the debate on the annual theme should be conducted, inter alia, on the basis of relevant work undertaken at the inter-sessional meetings of the Standing Committee, notably in respect of the Note on International Protection (EC/46/SC/CRP.37), which focuses on comprehensive approaches, including the issue of prevention, and with regard to the follow up to ECOSOC resolution 1995/56;

(c) Requests the High Commissioner to submit to the plenary session appropriate background documentation to provide a framework for the debate.

II. DECISION ON PROGRAMME AND FUNDING PROJECTIONS

The Standing Committee,

Recalling the decision of the forty-sixth session of the Executive Committee on programme, administrative and financial matters,

(a) Notes that the overall revised needs for 1996 are currently estimated at some $ 1.4 billion, of which projected needs for General Programmes remain at $ 445.3 million (including $500,000 which have been transferred from the Programme Reserve to the Fund for the International Field Staff Housing and Basic Amenities, as indicated in EC/46/SC/CRP.30, Annex V), as approved by the Executive Committee at its forty-sixth session, and those for Special Programmes are $949.6 million;

(b) Notes also the tentative budget estimates for 1997 General Programmes as set out in document EC/46/SC/CRP.30, which include a Programme Reserve estimated at 10 per cent of programmed activities;

(c) Notes the current level of contributions to UNHCR's programmes as well as the appeal of the High Commissioner to donor Governments for further announcements of contributions so as to permit continuation and timely implementation of the various assistance programmes.

III. DECISION ON LESSONS LEARNT FROM THE RWANDA EMERGENCY

The Standing Committee,

(a) Takes note of EC/46/SC/CRP.28 on Lessons Learnt from the Rwanda Emergency: Further Reflections;

(b) Welcomes measures taken by the High Commissioner to improve the emergency response capacity of the Office through the further development of rapid response mechanisms and standby arrangements;

(c) Underlines the importance of contingency planning and encourages efforts by UNHCR to develop guidelines in this respect, in consultation with the Department of Humanitarian Affairs and other United Nations agencies;

(d) Notes with satisfaction the emphasis placed in UNHCR's newly issued Programme Management Handbook on the selection, control and coordination of implementing partners in emergency situations;

(e) Encourages UNHCR to continue to play a catalytic role in initiating programmes that aim to assist local populations in areas affected by large concentrations of refugees;

(f) Commends the High Commissioner on innovative initiatives taken to improve security conditions in refugee camps in the Great Lakes region but notes, nevertheless, with concern the deteriorating security situation in parts of the region;

(g) Calls on UNHCR to participate actively in inter-agency consultations on the recommendations of the Joint Evaluation of Emergency Assistance to Rwanda, in particular in the interagency working groups established within the framework of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) to review ECOSOC resolution 1995/56 on the Strengthening of the Coordination of Emergency Humanitarian Assistance of the United Nations;

(h) Asks to be kept informed, in the context of UNHCR's periodic reports on emergency responses and on ECOSOC resolution 1995/56, of progress made in respect of the follow up of lessons learnt from the Rwanda emergency.

IV. DECISION ON INTERNAL OVERSIGHT MECHANISMS

The Standing Committee,

Recalling paragraph 11 of General Assembly resolution 48/218B requesting the Secretary-General to consult with the Executive Boards of the United Nations operational funds and programmes before submitting a detailed report to the Assembly on enhancing the internal oversight mechanisms in operational funds and programmes,

(a) Notes with appreciation the draft of the report of the Secretary-General on enhancing the internal oversight mechanism in operational funds and programmes;

(b) Welcomes the increased attention to oversight which the report reveals;

(c) Emphasizes the importance, as reflected in recommendation 5 of the draft report of the Secretary-General, of ensuring adequate mechanisms within UNHCR for continually monitoring the implementation of recommendations from oversight activities;

(d) Notes with satisfaction that the report reflects the progress made by UNHCR in strengthening oversight mechanisms within the Office;

(e) Urges the High Commissioner to continue to cooperate with the Office of Internal Oversight Services in enhancing internal oversight mechanisms, bearing in mind also the comments made by the Standing Committee;

(f) Requests the High Commissioner to convey to the Secretary-General the comments of the Standing Committee on the draft of his report to the General Assembly.

V. DECISION ON THE HEADQUARTERS SUPPORT COSTS OF INTERNATIONAL NGO PARTNERS

The Standing Committee,

(a) Recalls the decision taken at its meeting on 10-11 April 1996 (EC/46/SC/CRP.26) on the subject of headquarters support costs of international NGO partners, in particular para. (f) which resolved to determine the initial standard percentage for such support costs at its June 1996 meeting;

(b) Decides that the initial standard percentage shall be 5 per cent;

(c) Notes that, while this percentage should be applicable henceforth for new agreements, operational considerations may require a transition period for existing implementing arrangements that provide for a higher percentage, and authorizes UNHCR to maintain that higher percentage through 1997 in such cases;

(d) Requests UNHCR to collect, maintain and analyse data on the impact of this decision, including the cost breakdown, and to present this information to the first Standing Committee of 1998;

(e) Decides to review the situation, including the level of the standard percentage, in the first half of 1998.